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The New Communist Program

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The new communist program (full text published in the *New York Times*, August 1st, 1961) is a most illuminating document, because more clearly than any previous publication, it gives a picture of the nature of Khrushchevism and its plans for the future.

The program is a peculiar mixture of crude and oversimplified Marxism, of Leninist phrases, of welfare state ideals, of capitalistic materialism, Calvinistic work ethics, and Victorian morality. It is characterized by a deteriorated concept of socialism, by a reformist and evolutionary strategy for the achievement of socialism, and, most importantly, by the central role of the wish for international peace.

The program can only be understood properly in the context of communist ideology, in the historical context of a comparison with previous communist programs and in comparison with the Chinese position. Anyone who reads the program without knowledge of these various frames of reference may, for instance, think that a phrase like that which speaks of the „inevitable collapse of capitalism“ and the final victory of communism are aggressive statements, or even, as the *New York Times* editors put it „a new declaration of war against the free world.” What such interpretations do not understand is that Marxist theory (even the crude form contained in the communist program) is a historical theory, which assumes that changes in productive forces lead to changes in social and political forms, and that just as feudalism was followed by capitalism, so capitalism will be followed by socialism. The prediction of the final collapse of capitalism is a historical prediction, and by no means a declaration that capitalism must be overthrown by violent means. What matters is not the prediction of the ultimate victory of communism, but the method by which the new program promises to achieve this end.

The most important point in this respect is the fact that the program constitutes a move from a revolutionary to an evolutionary and near-reformist position. Naturally the program cannot say so, but nevertheless this is the fact, which becomes clear if one analyses the pertinent formulations. The program emphasizes that socialism will win by the *example* of a more perfect social organization, and especially of the economic superiority of communism. It stresses that such a victory should be achieved by „peaceful means“, by „winning a solid majority in parliament.“ It defines dictatorship of the proletariat as „the dictatorship of an overwhelming majority,“ thus returning to Marx, and turning away from Lenin's „substitutionist“ theory of the avant guarde.

In spite of predicting the final collapse of capitalism, the program makes certain important concessions: 1) that „capitalism may still flourish at particular times and in particular countries.“ 2) That „the working class of many countries can, even before capitalism is overthrown, compel the bourgeoisie to carry out meas-

ures that transcend ordinary reforms and are of vital importance to the working class and the progress of its struggle for socialism, as well as to the majority of the nation.“ 3) That even while part of the world is capitalistic, the aim of universal peace can be achieved. (The latter two assumptions are clearly in contrast to traditional communist teaching.)

The program's attitude toward social democratic parties points in the same direction. Even though they are criticized, the wish for cooperation with them is expressed. But the criticism is mainly directed against „right-wing socialists,“--again a distinction which was not customary in communist thinking.

It is of special importance to examine how Yugoslavia and China, respectively, are dealt with in the program. Yugoslavia is, of course, criticized in the program, but in an unusually mild way. It is said that „the Yugoslav leaders, by their revisionist policy contraposed Yugoslavia and the socialist camp to the international communist movement thus *threatening* the loss of the revolutionary gains of the Yugoslav people.“ (My italics, E.F.) Immediately after this sentence the program mentions China in the following eleven words: „The victory of the revolution in China was of special importance.“ Considering China's claims, this sentence is, certainly, a slap in the face. It is characteristic of the same attitude toward China that later in the program a criticism of Yugoslav „revisionism“ is expressed in a parallel way to the criticism of „dogmatism and sectarianism“, which are the conventional terms used when China is referred to.

From the standpoint of American policy, the most important emphasis of the program is that on peace and co-existence. The program states that its aim can be fulfilled under the conditions of peace, and that the prevention of a new world war is „the focal problem of today.“ It is very interesting and in contrast to some of the Chinese utterances that the appeal is made „to deliver mankind from a World War of extermination,“ and that the „all-destructive“ character of nuclear war is mentioned in other passages without saying that it would hit mainly the capitalist camp. Only once is such an allusion made; after saying „peaceful co-existence or disastrous war such is the alternative offered by history,“ the program adds „should the imperialist aggressors nevertheless venture to start a new world war, the people will no longer tolerate a system which drags them into devastating wars. They will sweep imperialism away and bury it.“

„General, complete disarmament, under strict international control“ is mentioned several times as the safest road to a durable peace.

The attitude to the new sovereign states and the colonial revolution is also very interesting. In the first place the program states that „the young sovereign states do not belong either to the system of imperialist states or to the system of Socialist states.“ The program thus reaffirms the position taken before by Khrushchev, of the friendly recognition of neutrality of the non-committed states. Furthermore, the program asks only for „the elimination of the remnants of colonialism, the eradication of imperialist rule, the ousting of foreign monopolies, the foundation of a national industry, the abolition of the feudal system and its survivals, the implementation of radical land reforms, with the participation of the entire peasantry and in its interests, the pursuit of an independent foreign policy of peace, the democratization of the life of society and the strengthening of political independence. The solution of national problems is in the best interest of all patriotic and progressive forces of the nation.“

This is a relatively modest program for the colonial peoples, in fact one to which essentially the United States would agree. The program furthermore makes allowances for the participation of „the national bourgeoisie in the policy of the colonial nations,” and analyzes the dual character of this bourgeoisie. The program furthermore stresses the positive role which the neutral states can play by saying „the national states become ever more active as an independent force on the world scene. ... The countries and peoples that are new free from colonial oppression are to play a prominent part in the prevention of a new world war--the focal problem of today.“ The fact that the program approves of „just anti-

imperialist wars of liberation“ by colonial peoples is nothing more than the expression of traditional Soviet sympathy with colonial liberation movements such as the Algerian, but cannot possibly be construed as part of a „new declaration of war.“

The program speaks at length of the final abolition of the communist party, and the withering away of the state, and of fully developed democratic procedures. While this is in complete contrast to the totalitarian nature of the present Russian regime, the emphasis on these points plus emphasis on decentralization, which is somewhat more real in the present Russian situation, indicates at least a tendency to greater freedom which, regardless of how much Khrushchev wishes it, is a concession which has to be made to the Russian population and which is of the same urgency as that of increased material satisfaction.

The new communist program not only is quite distinct from the more aggressive features of older communist tactics, it is basically different from the spirit of Marxist socialism. Nothing could be more telling that the statement which defines „the socialist principle“ as one „which insures that the members of society have a material interest in the fruits of their labor.“ Indeed, this principle has been accepted in Western capitalism for many decades and cannot be called a socialist principle. The whole concept of socialism in the program is that of a state-directed and owned economy which operates more efficiently than capitalism, and the last aim of which is the better economic performance for the people as a whole. Socialism in this program is not, as it was for Marx, a new society transcending capitalism, but it is essentially a welfare state operating more successfully than capitalism, but not different in spirit.

What the program promises in economic terms for the population as a result of further successful development does not transcend in essence the achievements of capitalist welfare states. Free medicine, schooling, books, higher education, and even the abolishment of rents and public transportation are hardly very utopian aims. Some of them have been long realized in England and Scandinavia. (Although this fact is strictly omitted from the program.) Even a measure about which there were many rumors before the program was published, like free bread, is not contained in the program.

While the economic aims of the program are those of a fully developed welfare state, the human aims are mare reactionary than those of most capitalistic countries. This becomes very clear in the description of the communist moral principles:

“The Party holds that the moral code of the builder of communism should comprise the following principles:

„Devotion to the Communist cause, love of the Socialist motherland and of the other Socialist countries;

“Conscientious labor for the good of society--he who does not work, neither shall he eat;

„Concern on the part of everyone for the preservation and growth of public wealth;

'A high sense of public duty intolerance of actions harmful to the public interest;

„Collectivism and comradely mutual assistance: one for all and all for one;

„Humane relations and mutual respect between individuals--man is to man a friend, comrade and brother;

„Honesty and truthfulness, moral purity, modesty and guilelessness in social and private life;

„Mutual respect in the family, and concern for the upbringing of children;

„An uncompromising attitude to injustice, parasitism, dishonesty and careerism;

„Friendship and brotherhood among all peoples of the U.S.S.R., intolerance of national and racial hatred;

„An uncompromising attitude to the enemies of communism, peace and the freedom of nations;

„Fraternal solidarity with the working people of all countries, and with all peoples.“

This moral program with its emphasis on family, work, patriotism, duty, has resemblances to the programs of Pétain or Salazar, but certainly none whatsoever with Marxist thought. It naively uncovers the cultural reality beyond the revolutionary phrases of Soviet Russia, that of Calvinist work morale, Victorian petty bourgeois stuffiness, and authoritarian moral principles. One might suspect that any very conservative or very reactionary visitor to the Soviet Union, who knows Russian, with the exception of the words for „God" and „Communism" will find himself very much at home in this cultural environment.

To sum up: the program gives a clear picture of the present state of the Soviet Union, and the intentions of its leaders. It is successful in the organization of a centrally directed state economy, and in increasing the material satisfaction for its inhabitants. It needs peace, and grants peace, and expects the socialist principles to win eventually, without violent revolutions or international war. It is not a revolutionary system, but on the contrary, a conservative one with, however, tendencies for increasing liberalization as its capacity for higher material standards increases.

It is a challenge to capitalism to compete successfully with communist performance, and the very opposite of a declaration of war.

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